

I remember riding with you in the front seat
on vacation near the Black Hills
the time Dad passed the guy poking along
pointing out rock formations to his family.
You stuck your finger far out the window
mocking him, Dad started honking at him,
and we all laughed like hell at all of them
as we passed. The wind knocked our arms
back and we fell off the seat laughing.
I loved you for that.

Home for Thanksgiving, twenty years later,
I go to the kitchen to get a beer.
As I reach for the light switch,
I accidentally knock her picture down,
breaking the frame but not the glass.
But more interesting is picking it up
and seeing for the first time, really,
the four wishbones he has set riding
along the top of the black frame.
There is one of them for each of us.
They lie before me on the table like legs.
I see the need to make a wish
and pull the big one apart,
and I also recognize the wish
with you not to.

HOW TO WIPE YOUR TWO-YEAR-OLD'S NOSE

Grab the tissue
box and lower it
slowly to a point
where she can reach
in and stay your
hand while she puts
the extras back and
point out what she
misses then hold your
tongue as she runs
into the other room
to throw it into
the wastebasket.

POEM ABOUT MAKING RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER

If she knew anything she'd quit right now.
If she knew anything she'd know nothing
can come from scissors and paste;
she'd know some other things, she'd know
Rudolph and Mickey are strictly

from Disney, for example. Yes,
she'll be quite confident about that
some day. But not now.
A few of the ants in our queenless "Ant Farm"
still tunnel. Some god is on the loose
putting an orange spot on the trunks
of trees and making them die.
I put my belly up against the desk.

-- James Klein

Passaic, NJ

IT'S STRANGE

it's strange when famous people die
whether they have fought the good fight or
the bad one.
it's strange when famous people die
whether we like them or not
they become like old buildings old streets
things and places that we are used to
which we accept simply because they've been
there.
it's strange when famous people die
it's like the death of a father or
a pet cat or dog.
and it's strange when famous people are killed
or when they kill themselves.
the trouble with the famous is that they need
to be replaced and they are never exactly
replaced, and that gives us this unique
sadness.
it's strange when famous people die
the sidewalks look different and our
fingernails look different and our bedmates
and our curtains and our automobiles.
it's strange when famous people die:
we become troubled.

THE VERYIEST

here comes the fishhead singing
here comes the baked potatoe in drag
here comes nothing to do all day long
here comes another night of no sleep
here comes the phone ringing the wrong voice